



Our Mission. Your Safety. Your Mobility. Your Economic Opportunity.

Idaho Transportation Department

News Release

2/16/2015

Contact:

Steve Grant

Public Information Specialist

(208) 334-8874

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ITD presents budget request to Idaho Legislature Monday

BOISE -- Adequate funding for Idaho's roads and bridges was the focus of a budget presentation to the Idaho Legislature's Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee by Idaho Transportation Department Director Brian Ness on Monday (Feb. 16).

Ness presented the Governor's fiscal 2016 budget recommendation for ITD of \$555.5 million. On average, federal funds make up approximately 54 percent of ITD's annual revenue.

"I believe our budget recommendation reflects my philosophy of better serving the citizens, not ourselves," he said.

"Internal changes we have made at ITD – including realignment and changing our work culture – have placed us in excellent position to address the state's infrastructure needs," he emphasized. "Morale is up, our culture more constructive, and we are investing our funding efficiently and wisely."

Ness reminded committee members that in 2010 the Governor's Task on Modernizing Transportation Funding in Idaho found that the state has a \$543 million yearly shortfall in transportation funding. Of that, \$262 million is needed annually just to preserve the system in the condition it is in today.

It has been nearly 20 years since the state last increased fuel and registration fees, he said, and that failure to keep up will cost future generations much more.

"For every \$1 we invest now when the roads and bridges are in good condition, we avoid spending \$6 to \$14 to repair or replace them when they are in poor condition," Ness explained. "If we continue to let Idaho's roads and bridges deteriorate, at a \$14 cost in the future, our annual shortfall equals \$3.6 billion per year."

The ITD presentation showed how Idaho's roads and bridges have aged since their construction and that 761 bridges on the state highway system are more than 50 years old. He explained that while Idaho's bridges are well designed and have stood the test of time, because of the funding shortfall, they must last far beyond their expected design lives of 40 to 60 years.

"At the rate Idaho currently funds its bridges, they must last 120 years," he said. "And we have hundreds of old bridges. Every one of them is an impediment to the state's economy, and we are working hard to replace as many as we can with current funding."

Ness said that addressing the annual shortfall would be an investment in Idaho's future and will provide great returns.

"This will grow the economy, and put contractors back to work. It will also reduce crashes and fatalities," he said. "Eliminating the \$262 million shortfall would remove all restricted bridges on the state highway system within 10 years. This is important because restricted bridges impede commerce."

Modern, well-maintained roads and bridges save lives, improve mobility and attract new businesses, he added.

He concluded his presentation by telling lawmakers that the transportation system is the engine of Idaho's economy and "it is our job to keep it running smoothly."

- end -

Editor's note: [Click here for a copy of the speaking notes](#) from the JFAC presentation, and [here for the copy of the slides](#) used in the presentation.

Questions? Visit us online at itd.idaho.gov, follow ITD on Twitter (@IdahoITD) or Facebook and check travel conditions at 511.idaho.gov or dial 5-1-1. Please slow down in highway construction zones and pay attention. Safety for drivers and workers is our highest priority.

###